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Durham, N. C. May, 1948

Rocky Mountain Meeting

Plans for the second meeting of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association are now being effected. As already announced, the meeting will be in Denver, during the Thanksgiving weekend, under the auspices of the University of Denver. As at the first annual meeting, affiliated societies will have special responsibility for particular group meetings. The College English Association and the National Council of Teachers of English will sponsor the Saturday morning meeting, "Problems in the Teaching of English in High School and College."

INDIANA C.E.A. VOTES AFFILIATION

The Indiana College English Association held its thirteenth annual conference on Friday and Saturday, April 30, May 1, at South Bend, as guests of the University of Notre Dame.

Following its tradition, the Association devoted its Friday afternoon sessions to a discussion of problems in literature, based on two papers. Mr. W. A. Sutton of Ball State Teachers College, in "Gertrude Stein Talking," presented a stenographic report of conversations with Gertrude Stein relative to various problems of writing. Mr. Martin Shockley of Evansville College gave an exposition de texte of one of Hart Crane's poems, "Lachrymae Christi."

The banquet meeting Friday evening was addressed by Dean Harlan Hatcher, of the College of Arts and Science, The Ohio State University, on the subject, "Toward American Cultural Maturity."

On Saturday morning Mr. Raymond W. Pence of DePauw University presided at a symposium, "The Case and Place for Grammar in College Elementary English Composition." Participants were Mr. Frank Moran, University of Notre Dame; Miss Bertha M. Watts, Canterbury College (Miss Watts' paper was read by Proxy); and Mr. Harold E. Whitehall, Indiana University. There was general agreement about the "case" and the "place," but lively discussion centered around the kind of grammar, with "traditional" and "prescriptive" grammar being opposed by the merits of "descriptive" grammar.

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1948 OFFICERS

As a result of the 1948 elections, the following officers are hereby declared elected:

President, Theodore Spencer, Harvard University.

Vice Presidents: Arthur K. Davis, University of Virginia; and John W. Dodds, Stanford University.

Subject to approval at the next election, President Spencer has appointed Gordon Keith Chalmers, President, Kenyon College to the vacancy on the Board of Directors caused by President Spencer's election. Ex-President Odell Shepard automatically becomes a member of the Board of Directors for three years.

New Treasurer

The Association has a new treasurer, Professor William A. Owens, Columbia University. Henceforth the Treasurer's office will have the same address as the Secretary's: Brooklyn College, Brooklyn 10, N. Y. All members please note.

Professor Jackson, who has served us long and faithfully, begged to be relieved last winter. He most generously assumed office when Professor Richardson had to resign because of ill health, and continued steadfastly while the Association grew. A vote of thanks should be an order of business at our next annual meeting for his careful custodianship of the Association's funds.

The new Treasurer is a Texan, with B.A. and M.A. from Southern Methodist, and Ph.D. from Iowa (1941). He has taught at Texas A. & M., Univ. of Texas, and Mississippi State College. Out of three years in the Army with the Counter Intelligence Corps, he spent twenty months in the Pacific, making the Leyte and Luzon landings, and sweating out the battle of Manila. He has a collection of ballads scheduled for publication November 1.

Members are requested to send the editor comments on English Teachers and English Teaching which they come across in their reading.

Please do not suppress that urge to write the editor.

The Muse's Mother-in-Law

As I look back on my first year as a graduate student in English, I recall very vividly the sense of oppression and depression with which I was overcome. I felt like a youngster reporting for work at an old, old mine. The richest deposits had been thoroughly worked out. The big, exciting pockets of nuggets had already been rifled. The mine shafts and tunnels now led further and further underground. And all around one lay mountains of slag, with the dinginess and dreariness which only a mountain of slag can embody.

Revolution Over?

When two professors and a publisher agree, that's news. And when they agree on scholarship, that's revolution. But when they agree in their heresies, the revolution is probably over. Here's how it was. Last April 24, the N. Y. Council of Teachers of English had a meeting at Rutgers. It was well attended and those who went got their money's worth and a dividend, too. The speakers were Cleanth Brooks, Yale; Robert Spiller, Pennsylvania; and Joseph Brandt, President, Henry Holt. Professor Brooks led off, and his remarks appear in full in this issue. Professor Spiller's paper, *Function of Literary Research, A Reconsideration*, and Dr. Brandt's address, were carefully summarized by the secretary, Mrs. Lillian H. Hornstein, N.Y.U. Through her courtesy, the following excerpts from the secretary's report are presented. (N.B. By general agreement, the high point of the meeting was *Pedantiad*, a poem by William Parker, new Secretary of MLA. He ought to print it in *PMLA* as an act of grace.)

Mr. Spiller stressed that the study of modern literature does not require the same kind of scholarship that is needed for classical studies. He also urged that scholars have not paid sufficient attention to literature since 1790. Moreover, mere survival is no evidence of literary worth.

For the new literature, the new novel, an initial critical judgment must be made before objectivity can be reached, and new techniques (for example, from history and the social sciences) are needed for the new materials. There is a close connection between literary problems and other problems of the day—but neither should be studied in a vacuum. Literary research should provide a means

(Continued on Page 4)

The giants of English literature, I found, had been processed and reprocessed. The second-rate figures had been carefully edited and their letters printed. Not even among the third-rate figures was it easy to stake out a new claim for oneself. Did one want to work on Colley Cibber? A book on Colley Cibber was in process of publication. What about writing a life of Tom May? Tom May's life had been written. The labor of scholars had extended on beyond the men of letters themselves to encompass persons and events which were related to literature only at second hand. To illustrate: I once heard a very interesting paper on the legal affairs of Thomas Middleton's mother-in-law. The scholar who read the paper had been interested in Thomas Middleton and perhaps interested in Elizabethan drama; when, however, no further information about Middleton turned up, but a juicy law suit of his mother-in-law did, the scholar brought to bear upon the mother-in-law's affairs all the formidable implements of modern research. I enjoyed the paper, let me add; but it seemed to me to deserve the same comment that the paper abstracted from Falstaff's pocket drew from Prince Hal: "Oh monstrous; but one half-penny worth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack!"

But it is important to observe that the implements of modern research work just as well on the problems of Middleton's mother-in-law as they work on the problems of Middleton himself. That is their glory and their limitation. Excellence of scholarship is no guarantee that the material on which it is expended has any real significance. It is a point that we tend to forget, and this may account for a state of affairs in which our more minute research deals typically not with the affairs of the poet's Muse but rather with those of his mother-in-law.

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Membership in the College English
Association \$2.00 a year, of which \$1.50
is for subscription of the CEA CRITIC.

Subscription for Libraries \$1.50.

Application for entry as Second Class
matter at Mineola, N. Y., is pending.

Sing high! Sing low!

The dilettante dice are crooked
And pedantry loathes the game,
While the bookmaker wonders or
snickers or thunders
At play written up in his name.

What price is the rich perception
And what are the odds on style?
Won't a parlay of spit, polish,
humor, and wit
Pay off even once in a while?

The influence tip is phony
And history's check is forged,
Yet the customers play, for the
game's rigged that way,
Till they're bankrupt, or bleary,
or gorged.

The system has paid protection;
Its rake-off's a high percent
Of the profit and pleasure and
sense in good measure
That was really the bookie's
intent.

Sing high! the English require-
ment.

Sing low! for the Ph.D.
And for tenure hooray, and a
long holiday
On a miniscular salary!

R.T.F.

Indiana CEA—

At the business meeting on
Saturday morning, the Indiana
association unanimously voted to
become affiliated with the na-
tional group, the College English
Association. New officers elected
were: President, John L. Blox-
some, Rose Polytechnic Institute;
Vice-President, George S. Wy-
koff, Purdue University; Secre-
tary-Treasurer, Villa L. Deubach,
Anderson College. Retiring of-
ficers were: President, Russell
Noyes, Indiana University; Vice-
President, John L. Bloxsome,
Rose Polytechnic Institute; Secre-
tary-Treasurer, Edna Hayes
Taylor, DePauw University.
GEORGE S. WYKOFF
Purdue University

New York Meeting

The New York State Section
of C. E. A. met at Wells College
on May 1, 1948. George Nesbitt,
Hamilton, stressed the import-
ance of classroom informality,
with questions and answers, and
brought the Battle of the Books
up to date by advocating class-
ics (OEDIPUS REX) rather
than moderns (Hemingway's
short stories). Bernard Schilling,
Rochester, read a paper on Eng-
lish for non-majors which will
appear shortly. Edwin Cady,
Syracuse, illustrated his ideas on
the presentation of literature by
discussing Whitman's "When li-
lacs last in the dooryard
bloomed." He stressed the bio-
graphical, historical, and intel-
lectual approach and spoke of
the importance of background
material and the analysis of
form and structure. After an
hour's discussion, the group ad-
joined for dinner. President
Greene of Wells College wel-
comed the members, and speak-
ing from his experience as an
English teacher, reminded them
how important it was not to take
themselves too seriously. Leo
Rockwell, Colgate, spoke of the
history of anthologies, giving ex-
amples which illustrated the
varying emphases on classical,
English, and American readings.
With some bitterness he deplored
the modern slogan "integration."
The meeting, the speakers, the
discussion, the weather, the
place, and the hospitality all
combined to make the day a
memorable one.

On the invitation of Professor
Kathryn Koller, the fall meeting
will be in Rochester. Margaret
Denny, Rochester, was elected
Secretary in place of Miriam
Small, Wells, who will be on
leave. A nominating committee
was appointed with instructions
to bring in a slate of officers at
the fall meeting: Strang Law-
son, Colgate, Chairman, Willard
Bonner, Buffalo, and Ruth Tem-
ple, Brooklyn College.

GRACE NOTE

The lyric below, read to the
Washington meeting of the As-
sociation by Professor Millett
and printed in the February,
1947 issue of the NEWS LET-
TER, seems a fitting grace note
to THE MUSE'S MOTHER-IN-
LAW in this issue.

Lully, lully, lully, lully

The falcon hath borne my mate
away,He bore him up, he bore him
down;He bore him into an orchard
brown.In that orchard there was a hall
That was hanged with purple
and pallAnd in that hall there was a bed
It was hanged with gold so redAnd in that bed there lyeth a
knightHis wounds bleeding day and
nightBy that bed's side there kneel-
eth a maidAnd she weepeth both night and
dayAnd by that bed's side there
standeth a stone

"Corpus Christi" written thereon.

How Much is an
Elective Course?

Is there an ideal size for an
"elective course"? Some rather
dogmatic views on this subject
were expressed recently in a
committee meeting which the
author attended. In fact, one
reputable professor went so far
as to say that any college which
holds classes in which there are
less than ten students is misusing
its funds. And another no less
worthy gentleman added that he
could do just as good teaching in
a group of forty students as in a
group of twelve.

Bewildered by such outspoken
opinions as these and confused
by the divergence of opinion on
these questions which he ob-
served outside the committee
room, the author began a study
of the whole matter, of which
this is a preliminary report. He
sent a questionnaire consisting
of seven queries to every college
for women in the southeastern
United States. While the results
are not conclusive, some of the
averages and conclusions which
resulted from a tabulation of the
answers are interesting.

The first question was: "How
many elective courses (above
freshman and sophomore level)
do you keep alive in your Eng-
lish department by carrying
them regularly in your catalog?
The replies to this question
range from a minimum of 2
percent of listed courses given
during each semester at Okla-
homa State College for Women
to a maximum of 100 percent
Mississippi State College for
Women. The average percentage
is 54. These figures are not
conclusive as they might be
only six institutions replied to
this question. Georgia State
College, Florida State Univer-
sity at Tallahassee, and Georgia
State Woman's College are only
the quarter system and could
be compared only among them-
selves. Mary Washington re-
sponded with the statement, "We
do not pad our catalog, but only
list those courses that are ac-
tually offered." Perhaps this
should be interpreted as a 100
percent offering; but since no fig-
ures were given, the assumption
may not be safe.

The second question was: "Do
you have a fixed minimum en-
rollment? That is, have you es-
tablished a definite and rigid
dead line, and if fewer students
than this enroll do you "kill" the
course?" Six colleges or univer-
sities definitely answered, "No."
Two have established a minimum
of five and three have set up ten
as the limiting number. None of
these limits seems to be rigid.
Georgia State College says, "No,
but we gaze askance at classes
smaller than ten." Texas State
College for Women replies, "We
generally hold that we should
have eight or more; but we give
courses that are required of our
majors to fewer." "There is a
kind of unwritten law that there
should be ten students enrolled
in the course before it can be
given . . . We have a small num-
ber of courses which have less
than ten enrolled in them," re-
ports the Woman's College of
North Carolina. And sooner
or later, in such a collection of
material as this, the tocsin of
alarm is always sounded: Mis-
sissippi contributes the follow-
ing heart-warming observation,
"Since there is such a trend
away from liberal arts in favor
of utilitarian electives, we have
to protect our English elec-
tives to keep up the standards
of the English Department.
Therefore we let electives go
through with comparatively few
students." The statement of Mary
Washington is interesting also:
"We eliminate courses that just
have a few students with the ex-
ception of courses the English
Department is anxious to get
started."

The third question was: "Can an instructor in your English Department do as good work with twenty-five in a section of an elective course as he can in a smaller section?" Of the eleven colleges to whom this question-naire was sent one returned such an indefinite answer that that the material can not easily be correlated with the others. Only one expressed itself decidedly as seeing no advantage in small elective classes: "I do not agree that a class less than 10 students is too expensive for the state. A class less than 10 students usually does not challenge best from a professor." (Oklahoma) Eight lean decidedly only toward small elective classes. Some of them were quite emphatic that "A course can be taught more intensively with fewer than twenty-five students." (Mississippi) Georgia State College insists that "About twelve students is the best number for most English electives." Florida thinks an enrollment of eight to fifteen "almost ideal." Winthrop is sure that "when an elective course is larger than 15, there is little opportunity for personal contact." Mary Washington asserts that "students doing advanced work in English benefit from small classes."

From all the remarks, the prevailing opinion seems evidently to be that the nature of the class should determine its size. "Student reaction," "free discussion on the part of every student," and "personal contact" are factors which should limit the size of a group doing elective work in English. A majority believe in the more efficacious functioning of small sections, though there is disagreement about what small means, and though their belief is sometimes restricted by carefully expressed qualifications.

Furthermore, although written and unwritten laws exist limiting the smallness of the group, these are ignored if the circumstances constitute what is considered a justification for keeping the courses. There is practically no feeling that a college is required to keep the sizes of its courses above a certain point, or suffer pangs of conscience or worse because it is misusing its funds. The average size of current electives in English is sixteen.

Finally, English Electives, by the nature of the material taught and the purpose for which it is taught, generally function more rewardingly if their size is held down, at least below twenty-five.

Paul Mowbray Wheeler
Winthrop College
Rock Hill, S. C.

I'VE BEEN READING

Members are invited to contribute reviews of books, old or new, which they wish to call to the attention of other English teachers. Professor J. Gordon Eaker, the Assistant Editor, is in charge of I'VE BEEN READING. He is Head, Department of English, Jersey City Junior College, Jersey City, N. J.

Comments on reviews will be welcomed.

THE NOTEBOOKS OF HENRY JAMES

Edited with an introduction and commentary by F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock. 418 pp. index. New York: Oxford University Press. \$6.

The career of Henry James provides a striking example of a novelist who cultivated unceasingly an inexhaustible sensibility and for whom the problems and processes of his art were sources of endless fascination. To such a man it was a matter of more than common chagrin that critics and the general public alike lacked responsiveness and were little disposed to reward the artist by looking for his implications. Thus he wrote the prefaces for his collected edition as an elucidation of his methods and a plea for more discriminating appreciation.

These notebooks, with entries from 1878 to 1911, differ materially from the prefaces. They are the record of the author's private communings with himself, not intended for publication, and dealing, for the greater part, not with major issues but with specific problems of handling ideas for stories and novels. As supplementary material for the study of the novelist's methods and point of view, they are of extraordinary interest and value. Their publication makes it now possible to trace step by step the process by which James arrived at the solution of an artistic or a technical problem. They throw fresh light not only upon the working of his mind in the act of creation, but also upon his reaction to the problem of living in Europe and his enduring devotion to his art. Included with the notebooks are three related documents, the most important of which is the "scenario" for *The Ambassadors*, a detailed synopsis of great interest, previously printed in part in *Hound and Horn*.

The editors have done their work skillfully and are particularly to be commended for their care in providing an easily readable version of the manuscripts.

Also noteworthy are the inserted passages of commentary relating the notes to the novels and stories evolved from them.

BRUCE McCULLOUGH
New York University

Love and War in the Middle English Romances by Margaret Adlum Gist, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1947, 214 pp., \$4.00.

With a wealth of illustration and extensive references the author of this volume has sought to discover how the relations between men and women and the theory and practice of war were dealt with in the middle English Romances and whether, on the whole, this treatment was realistic or not. She has found that the romances taken together present a picture of woman's place in medieval society that is essentially truthful. In spite of the fact that women are idealized in the romances, their inferior position is clearly shown; and although the prevalence of irregular unions is indicated, they are seldom condoned in accordance with the French pattern of courtly love.

In considering war and peace the romances adopt the equivocal answer of medieval moralists to the question of how war may be reconciled with the teachings of Christianity; but they also exaggerate the part that women played as the inspiration for military encounter. Furthermore they idealize the actual conduct of war and practice of gallantry. Nevertheless we are told "that the romances present the essential outlines and the fundamental concepts of medieval society and reproduce faithfully the ideal which were the correctives for the many evils of the age."

R. BALFOUR DANIELS
University of Houston

A CHARME

ffor babes at night

Turne off ye light,

This is night.

Never feare,

Angels neare.

No more fun,

Littel sonne.

OR HERE MAY BE INTONED:

Drinke of water

Littel daughter?

God be wth you,

We will misse you.

No more talkinge,

Catts are stalking!

Albert Howard Carter
938 West Douglas Street
Fayetteville, Arkansas

High School College English Some Hard Sense

Among topics of interest on the program of the first meeting of the Rocky Mountain M.L.A., was the symposium on "What the College Freshman Should Bring from High School English," under the chairmanship of Professor Wilson O. Clough (Wyoming).

Dr. Ben Gray Lumpkin (Colorado) first presented a "Positive Method of Teaching Sentence Structures," through the medium of writing sentences imitative of living expression. His argument was that handbooks and drill exercises bring small results because they identify rather than use desirable constructions.

Dr. Harold G. Merriam (Montana) scored the practice of bringing from high schools the history of English and American literature. Such classes, he found, are not correlated with history, cover a confusion of names and titles, and require short-term memorizing. The student concentrates on what is essentially a non-literary process, and fails to grasp the work of mature authors. Dr. Merriam further questioned the teaching of composition by teachers of literature, since the standard set is one of "literary" English, and the avoidance of the practical composition needs of the student.

Sister Marie Clyde (Loretto Heights, Denver) was struck with the average freshman's

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lack of discriminating vocabulary, and lack of organizing ability.

Dr. Quincy Guy Burris (New Mexico Highlands University) stressed five needs of the entering freshman: the ability to read, some capacity to separate ideas and break down elaborated thought, some experience with writing, and some liking for literature.

Two teachers from the Albuquerque High School gave a vigorous defense of the high school. Miss Barbara Phillips reminded college teachers of the gap between high school and college, and the fact that high schools no longer perform a sifting function as in former days. The crowded high schools today, she said, respond to the pressures by short-answer tests and fragmentary composition. More emphasis is needed on essay type examinations and comprehensive reading. High school students, used to rating scales, care less and less for knowledge for its own sake, but only for the superior rating. Miss Lydia Strand corroborated Miss Phillips, and stressed the value of complete answers in oral expression as a foundation for good writing. Teachers, she said, often accept fragments of words, even facial expressions and gestures, as answers. She felt that college plunged freshmen too soon into long, unrealistic theme composition.

Miss Katherine Simons (New Mexico) maintained that the colleges are reaping the results of their own inventions and their own influence on the high schools: namely, grading by the curve, flash-card teaching of reading, emphasis on methods first, and experimental methods, and the mere mechanics of getting credits. She saw a growing need for scrutiny of the preparation of high school teachers, and for an attack on the wide-spread opinion that "anyone can teach English."

Dr. George R. Carlsen (Colorado) thought that the high school teacher was too conscious of college entrance standards, since actually but 10 percent of high school students go on to college.

Dr. C. V. Wicker (New Mexico) emphasized that if only 10 percent go to college, it is the more reason that all should get the fundamentals of education in the high school. Since the teaching of composition is difficult, we rationalize ourselves out of our responsibility by such devices as workbooks, oral English, and objective tests. Writing is a hard discipline, and should be continuous from the early grades.

W. O. CLOUGH,
Univ. of Wyoming.

Folksongs on Records

Folksongs on Records, 7 pp., mimeographed, by Ben Gray Lumpkin, 428 Arapahoe Ave., Boulder, Colo. 15c. May, 1948. Copyright. This is a handy list. Says the editor, "Both collectors and teachers have frequently asked for lists of phonograph records and books used in connection with my folksong and ballad course at the University of Colorado. To provide a ready means of exchanging lists and brief comments, I propose to publish this bulletin twice a year. Please send me your suggested additions, especially on Canadian and Spanish American songs."

WINS \$1200 LITERARY AWARD

Dodd, Mead and Company announces the award of the annual Inter-collegiate Literary Fellowship to Ann Birstein, a member of the class of 1948 at Queens College, New York. The prize-winning novel is tentatively entitled FRUIT OF HIS GOODNESS.

Revolution Over?

(Continued from Page 1)

for the end—but the old methods provide no technique for investigating the imagination. For example, the most objective of the old methods, the study of philosophy, has the least use for the imagination.

The subject of study should be the nature of the creative process, the problems of the relation of biography and history to the creative process. In this sense we need a redefinition of "source" and of those elements which go into literary production.

Professor Spiller suggested that though it might be difficult to draw a line between scholarship and criticism, we should start our study with the work of art. He urged finally that our object of study should be to learn more about "the human spirit in its fullest creative aspects."

Dr. Brandt was the final speaker of the morning session. He pointed out by way of introduction that all three speakers on the morning program are former Rhodes Scholars. He then launched into his chief points of attack against the Graduate Schools, to which he referred as "the research trust now regnant in this country". He argued that he quarrelled with any system that enslaves the scholarly writer or forces the scholar into meaningless research projects.

He also raised two questions: (1) whether research is synonymous with scholarship; (2)

whether research presumes the ability to be an author.

Dr. Brandt then said that in his opinion scholarship presupposes wisdom and understanding; but the academic structure of research has stopped the free play of ideas and led to an intellectual slave market. Dr. Brandt then gave statistics to prove that the awareness of idea content is very, very rare, that the public does not turn to scholars in these days: for example, 90% of the people get their ideas chiefly from the radio, 21% from newspapers, 11% from movies, and only 8% from books. Also, though there are 20,000 liquor stores in U.S.A., there are only 5,000 book stores, and of these only 500 do a business of over \$5,000 a year. This points out the serious situation that the book has declined as a public force in this country. Dr. Brandt urged that the best ideas should come from scholars and should be tested by scholars. Restless questioning should be the center of research, but that questioning is missing and answers are missing. The result has been that the public is terrified when it hears that scholarly research can produce effects with which the public should be concerned. It is now the function of the scholarly writing to fill the great void between the scholar and the public.

The Muse's Mother-in-Law

(Continued from Page 1)

To return to my original metaphor: the young graduate student not only felt that the mine was worked out. He feared that his own mining might have to be conducted on one of the great heaps of waste, rehandling the low-grade ore that has been passed over by earlier miners who were anxious to get on to richer materials.

There was of course another alternative, one that has been already suggested: he might push a shaft deeper and deeper into the foundations of the hills and take what material he could find, if not that precious metal which Keats had in mind when he called literature the realms of gold, then, content himself with baser substances, remembering that even the lead of sociology was worth something and that whether in terms of lead or gold the laborer is worthy of his hire.

But in any case, this young graduate student, sobered and as I have said, depressed, realized one thing clearly: that literary research had become abstract and highly specialized. He saw himself, through the course of years, hacking away in the dark, at the end of his own narrow shaft, in isolation from his fellows. He did not

dread the work as work. He did deplore the specialization and the isolation, and he was fearful of the consequences of such specialization and isolation on a mind devoted to literature. He had seen too many veterans from the pits who blinked owl-like in the light of common day and were tongue-tied from their own intense preoccupation.

The depressing prospect was of course, rendered several shades too melodramatic, by his own youthfulness. The actuality proved to be not nearly as bad. I must remind you that

Warfel • Mathews • Bushman

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have been trying to recover a state of mind from a particular period—not to claim that my metaphor is an accurate rendering of the facts. But even so, I still think that the picture I have conjured up is not to be dismissed with a laugh. I maintain that in its essentials it gives a sound view of the possibilities and limitations of a certain kind of research.

There are two aspects of the situation suggested by my metaphor that I should like to stress. The first is the obsession with facts as facts; the second is the

high degree of specialization. In dealing with the first I do not mean to disparage the importance of facts as facts. Some facts are all important; but some are of only limited importance; and some are merely curious. The fact of Shakespeare's texts, for example, is certainly all important. Linguistic and ideological facts, bearing as they do on Shakespeare's vocabulary, may be of great importance; but the facts of Shakespeare's life, considered strictly in terms of literary relevance, are of limited importance. The proof is that his plays come through so powerfully though we know very few facts of his life. Last of all, there are facts which are merely curious. I should love nothing better, for example, than to be able to find a letter in Shakespeare's own handwriting—even if the letter merely discussed Stratford gossip or the details of his wardrobe, or refused a dinner engagement. I do not say that such a letter might not throw some light on Shakespeare's life and even possibly, just possibly, on the meaning of his plays, but I know that the chances are very great that the facts revealed would be, from the standpoint of literature, merely curious. I should treasure the letter, certainly. But if I am honest with myself, I realize that my motive would be finally sentimental.

I think that I read what is going on in the minds of a good many of you as I utter these heretical words: "But how can you say that any fact may not perhaps turn out to be relevant and highly important? The chemist has learned that any experiment, however 'irrelevant,' may be the key to important truths." Yes, I am familiar with this view, and I honor the grain of truth that it contains; but I think that we have allowed ourselves to be hypnotized by our colleagues in the science departments. We have come to worship the accumulation of facts—any facts—to the point that our departments are buried beneath the heaps of irrelevant facts, the slag which I mentioned earlier. For our profession to teach literature in itself provides us with a center of relevance. I do not claim that it constitutes the only center of relevance, or that teaching literature ought to be our sole task. But until we do a better job of teaching literature than we now do, I think that we stand convicted of neglecting the center in favor of the peripheries, of dredging up curious facts about the poet's life or social milieu instead of dealing competently with the poem.

The second point which I said I wanted to amplify is our spe-

cialization. It is obviously closely related to our overconcern with facts in the mass. We have put such a premium on digging up any facts, however irrelevant to literature, that each of us is tempted to work away in separation and in essential isolation from his fellows. The common ground that English professors share is, I am afraid, primarily a set of research techniques. What do English professors read for pleasure? What do they honestly like? Where does their disciplined taste find a common ground? In my more cynical moments I am inclined to say that what they enjoy in common is exhausted by the Essays of Elia and the less acerbic ironies of *The New Yorker*. That our interests are not focused on literature, that our attitudes and techniques are those of lesser historians, that we are no longer men of letters—these things account for the notorious gap which exists between the English department and the practising craftsman—between the academic mind and the mind of the creative writer. This situation also accounts, it seems to me, for the lack of seriousness with which the English professor is usually, and I fear too often properly, regarded by his colleagues.

What I have just said will explain why I shall not propose some of the obvious solutions for our problems of research. But it may be well for me to indicate quite specifically that I am not unaware of these obvious solutions. In the first place, I grant that we do not yet know all we want to know about the eighteenth century, or the Elizabethan period, or any other period. I admit that really perfect editions of many of the principal poets are lacking. I am aware that unpublished letters and diaries are still to be found in the British Museum and in other great libraries. Moreover, after the exciting discoveries of the Boswell papers at Malahide Castle and at Fettercairn, it would be a rash man who would predict that further discoveries of the first importance will not be made. Someone was telling me the other day that we might expect a good many fresh discoveries in the next few years because the heavy land taxes in England and the consequent closing of the great houses will probably bring out of obscurity masses of material. In any case, in the years to come a great deal of conventional research will go on, and ought to go on. But to repeat, such accessions of new ore will not solve our problem nor will they prevent other graduate students interested in literature from feeling, as I

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felt, that they are reporting for work at an old, old mine, and must prepare to spend a great part of their lives deep underground. And lest the reiteration of the last phrase hint at an inveterate claustrophobia on my part, or suggest a lily-handed aversion to honest toil, let me say that I hold a union card, and have spent several years, and expect to spend many more, quite happily, following a vein that leads through the mid-strata of the eighteenth century.

Well, then, what does remain to be done in English literature? Much, I should say, a very great deal indeed. We might begin by making a critical examination of the literature, for example; and lest this seem too brash, let me hasten to amplify. My own personal experience has been that many a poem which I was confident to know, it turned out I did not know at all. The poem revealed depths not before suspected. I am not speaking here of trivia, of minor elegancies. I am thinking of the fundamentals of meaning. Poems that had been assigned a particular meaning showed, on inspection, that they were something quite different. If you will pardon personal illustrations, let me give one or two. It was for me exciting to find that Marvell's "Horatian Ode" was not a Puritan poem, not even a Cromwellian poem at its center, and certainly not a cool and moderate splitting of the difference between extremes. Marvell had found a synthesis in which his attitudes toward Charles I and toward the usurper Cromwell could be united. Here was no vacillation of the trimmer, nor the moderation of the impartial honest broker between factions—not unless cool moderation might itself be passionate, and ice burn like fire. It was exciting to discover that Herrick's "Corinna's Going A-Maying" was no reiteration of the pagan *carpe diem* theme—that in the very texture of this limpid poem Christianity and paganism were arrayed in conscious antagonism, so that the song became brilliantly dramatic. Perhaps I should not use the term "discover." Perhaps they were not discoveries at all, but merely my own personal recoveries of the poems. But at any rate, they had to be recovered; they did not exist in print, and yet they bear powerfully and directly on one's teaching of the poems. They tie into specifically literary problems and the whole realm of literary value. They do even more. They have powerful repercussions on the whole realm of unsorted facts, for they provide a center of relevance which makes certain

facts acquire significance in literary terms.

To illustrate, the special synthesis which Herrick makes of Christian and pagan materials lights up his whole concern with pagan festivals as indicated in so many of the poems in the *Hesperides*. The precise nature of Marvell's estimate of Cromwell does much to smooth the very erratic political course which he pursued from his royalist poems of 1649 and his attack on the parliamentary Tom May in 1650, to his becoming, a few months later, the tutor in the Puritan Fairfax's household. As I tried to indicate earlier, there can be no objection to digging up facts, but if we profess literature we need to know which facts are relevant and which are not. The facts cannot be counted on to sort and assemble themselves into a pattern. A more intimate understanding of the literature might provide hypotheses for our facts. The facts do not interpret literature; rather the literature interprets the facts.

But this matter of providing a center for our conventional research, though important, is finally secondary. What is exciting and what is of first importance is to see that the big problems and the directly relevant problems to literature have been almost untouched. I am conscious of no exaggeration in saying that the "big" problems are still untouched, and that for a person interested in literature the metaphor of the worked-out mine has no longer any relevance. He is much more likely to feel like an explorer standing on a ridge which overlooks an all but virgin continent. I am willing to apply the last metaphor even to Shakespeare himself. Miss Spurgeon's book on Shakespeare's imagery is valuable, not so much for what it accomplishes as for the possibilities it opens up. It leads into the forest but does little more than penetrate beyond its edge. G. Wilson Knight's books on Shakespeare, again, constitute forays into the wilderness rather than beaten paths. I should add that his trails sometimes double back on themselves or lose themselves in metaphysical swamps. But they do point a direction. If this is true of Shakespeare, it should be more obviously true of other poets and dramatists and writers of fiction.

I think that it is true of them, though limitation of time forbid further illustrations. Suffice it to say that we are witnessing in our time a critical revolution fraught with most important consequences for the

study of literature. In it one can find gathered the impact of semantics, anthropology, and some aspects of the new psychology, but most important of all is a willingness to take literature seriously, and to take the role of the artist seriously. The movement (if one can call something so vague a movement), I dare say, has its lunatic fringe. It is possible that I represent this fringe, though I have tried to be moderate and restrained in my claims. At any rate, even a lunatic can see that the new critical emphasis is not, on principle, hostile to the older scholarship. It needs the older scholarship, and, as I have tried to indicate, it can, in turn, aid it.

Thus far, I have dealt with the whole problem in the narrowest of professional terms. I have simply assumed that English professors are important. I have not questioned our function or status in society. I have dealt with the matter merely in terms of materials for us to work, without special attention to the question of whether it was work which justified itself in value to the society or was merely busy work. But I should feel that I have insulted this audience if I did not glance at least at the larger issue.

I suppose that the salient fact about our society is the predominance of means over ends, techniques over values, analysis over synthesis. Recently the split in our society has become alarming. It has alarmed even the technicians. Increasingly the custodians of the humanities are being asked to restore a synthesis—to point us toward values. I myself think that this new concern for the importance of the humanities is coming a little late. I am not sure that our society has not been too deeply fissured and fissioned for a group of English professors to do much about it. But whether or not we can hope to repair the damage, it surely behooves us to be about our proper job, to concern ourselves with the permanent qualities of literature rather than what may be called the sociology of literature. "In short, the professor of literature needs to take seriously again the art which he professes. He must not forget that it is an art." He must be prepared to deal with it in its dimension as an art. If he does so he will at least have the satisfaction of finding that it is a dimension in which so few have gone before him, that it is new, exciting, even an adventure.

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Poetry and General Education

By

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President of Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio

THE relatively new term, General Education, under which the curriculum of studies is being revised, has acquired in its common application a specialized and restricted meaning. By explicit definition it is the education necessary for all and to each to the limit of his ability to take and use. But by application to college and school plans it has been qualified by a narrow definition of the humanities and a popular idea about the purpose of learning. The humanities are said to be the study of the art, literature, and general philosophy of past ages; colleges are said to exist in order to solve the known social problems of the present. In effect the humanities are treated as the study of societies: how this one emerged from some other and compares with a third. The humanities are equated with cultural history, not far different from the history of cultures or of men in groups; and cultural history is said to be the core of the core of General Education.

The idea of a general education necessary to all and to be made available to each to the limit of his ability to take and use is excellent. The current restriction of the idea outlined above and operative in the powerful movements of college and school planning is something less than excellent. In effect it neglects the centre of all human concern, the individual, abets the tendency of systematic learning to

stress images and blind itself to objects, and omits altogether the best and characteristic way to think about man.

The purpose of college is something more than the solution of current social problems, of the humanities, than the transmission of past ages, and the core of general education is not cultural history. The first task of the higher learning is to lead men to ask the right questions, on the assumption that most of the right questions are not being asked and that many have never yet been asked; of the humanities, to inquire into man in action, both inner and outer action; and the core of general education is both a subject and a way to treat it. The subject is man and the way is the best way to think about man.

Oddly enough, the best way to think about man, the humane way, has never been firmly named. I shall call it by a clumsy term whose meaning I shall describe though not define. The best way to think about man is poetic; at the core of general education stands poetic thinking.

How effectively to put it there in the middle of the twentieth century will require more home work, far more effort, and especially more concentrated humane thinking than has yet gone into the voluminous reports of general education. Education appropriate to other centuries succeeded in this far better than we do today, and it would be salutary to remark what the real virtue of the old-fashioned literary education was. The new literary education offers suggestions, also, toward a solution of the problem. I predict that it will approach solution not so much by argument as by experience, since the weak conception of the humanities which underlies the inadequate notion of general education arises from lack of experience rather than failure of dialectic.

"General education," says the President's Commission on Higher Education, "undertakes to re-define liberal education in terms of life's problems as men face them, to give it human orientation and social direction, to invest it with content that is directly relevant to the demands of contemporary society." To see the nature of this re-definition of college some analysis of the term general education will be necessary. The term gained prominence to describe the General College of the University of Minnesota where were put the underclassmen who by law had a right to be enrolled but who in fact had no impressive interest in any of the colleges of the university. To these young people lectures are given, and at the end of two years many of them leave with a certificate testifying that they have received general education. In the famous report of the Harvard Committee on *General Education in a Free Society*, the term means something very different. The Harvard Committee held that some knowledge and skill is peculiarly human and thus belongs to all men; some by native aptitude can take and use much of this, others, little; to each it should be available to the limit of his ability to take and use. This the

Committee calls general education. It is good for schoolboys, fox-hunting squires and higher mathematicians. The one general education is good for the dull, indolent or uninterested; the other, for everybody, and notably for the most able. But in applying the idea of general education to all American youth, reasons supporting these two views of general education have become mixed, and theories of what is good for the dull, indolent, uninterested or otherwise ill-equipped have been proposed as if necessary for all. The President's Commission is peculiarly subject to this confusion.

As I have said, the applications of the idea of general education now influential and operative are less than excellent. They involve two other good ideas gone sour, one concerning the nature of the humanities, and the other, the purpose of the university.

The effective idea of the humanities in the United States is succinctly stated by President Conant, who says that they are the "study of the art, literature and general philosophy of previous ages." Humanists, in this view, are transmitters. A committee appointed by the American Council of Learned Societies stated in a volume entitled *Liberal Education Re-examined*, "The two most significant ways of relating things to one another are the temporal and the systematic," and for this reason it placed history and philosophy at the top as the best of the ways of knowing. "A man may be said to be cultured . . .," said the committee, "in proportion to his ability to interpret all the facts at his disposal, all his valued experiences, all his more particular interpretations and beliefs, in an historical, philosophical and global perspective." These notions conform to the opinion recently expressed that at the centre of general education lies cultural history; and they are axiomatic in the report of the President's Commission on Higher Education. Such ideas, indeed, prevail among large groups of twentieth century scholars.

Accepting from many professors of the humanities their own creed, modern university and college presidents have coupled with it the pressing sense of the trials and worries of the day and have come to the conclusion that what and how to teach should be determined by relevance to contemporary society. President Eliot said over half a century ago that the university exists for power and service, and his doctrine is now more universally accepted than any single theory of light or the atom. More and more the university exists to solve the problems (meaning the social problems) of the present. Last autumn I heard a new college president say: Our only and entire problem is survival.

So Algo Henderson, formerly president of Antioch College, says that the attention of the college should be "focussed on contemporary society." The college "searches the past for wisdom that will help solve the problems of the present and will aid in planning for the future." "Education must take its direction from an over-all hypothesis

concerning what constitutes the best society." President Conant applies the same general view to English teaching when he says, "The significance of the dramas, novels, and poems of the English-speaking people of the last three hundred years for the vast majority of our young people lies in their ability to help us understand the origins of our present civilization."

Both educators consider the alleged tastes and prejudices of the young, and in doing so they are consistent with the practical spirit of all of their books and essays on education. President Conant said in his Sachs lectures: "All concerned with the future of the humanities in the schools might well proclaim the fact that since we are living in a technical and scientific age, some attempt must be made to relate the present of this bewildering scene to the much more simple past. To the academically slow-minded youth who wants to do something practical, the appeal of the printed word must be an appeal to a story of simple origins, in order to illuminate an amazing picture. Curiosity, I believe, is more widely distributed than innate love of literature. It is to curiosity that I should turn to bring out in the vast majority of our pupils the willingness to immerse themselves in our cultural heritage . . . By appealing to the curiosity of *all* youth about the origins of an obviously complex and unintelligible technological society, we may evoke a willingness to learn about the past." And Dr. Henderson, in *Vitalizing Liberal Education*: "to improve society for all men . . . Whether or not this is the ultimate purpose of life for all time, it is the one which stands the best chance of capturing the imagination of young people today."

The statements quoted voice the prevailing opinion why we keep school and why in undertaking the new collaborative courses in general education the majorities of the committees think as they do about the course in Western Civilization or the Humanities. President Conant put the matter forcefully to the college and university presidents meeting in Boston when he said that cultural history is the core of the core of general education.

To regard the rim of the argument before the hub, my experience does not lead me to think that curiosity is more widespread than something which makes possible a love of literature. I should agree, it is true, that in evangelical terms there is probably no good thing more alluring in the thoughts of most of the excellent young than the immediate improvement of society, but one well might ask whether our purpose as teachers is evangelical in this sense and whether to the extent that the teacher is a preacher, he should be beguiled into a doctrine because it is easy to preach effectively. I fail to see *how* one can teach, except according to his idea, however hazy, halting and tentative, of the ultimate purpose of life.

To inquire whether curiosity is more widely distributed than

innate love of literature, one should go pretty far beyond the classroom and batteries of tests. Curiosity, I suppose, begins small. It must grow considerably before it becomes an innate love of science, but that is just what it grows into, and it is magnificent. You have seen it in the mere crib, recognizing it by the baby's response to something—toes, red, or a whistle—noticed for the first time and worth investigation. The love of literature begins small, and it, too, is amazing. You see it in response to something ordered, like a jingle, and you see that it is a desire to find form in experience. All experience being personal and all important experience touching us deep, from the start this desire involves affairs vital to our existence.

To see the matter socially we have but to observe the ballads, the crowds at the theatre or the movies, the myriad juke boxes and dance floors, the millions of radios. Are more children curious than eager for order superimposed upon experience? You would have to ask Dr. Gallup. My observation is that the young, academically slow-minded and academically speedy, can learn to read poetry and understand it and write poetry, some of it meritorious, and that the reason why few do this is that as a nation and as professors we do not think the matter important. So much for the view that the humane study in General Education must be confined to a description of societies because this is what the young can be made curious about.

Consider now the centre of the matter. In the reports and discussions of the humanities conference held at Princeton to celebrate the bicentennial, the two best statements which I have seen were made by a Frenchman and a Mexican. M. Maritain flew to America to say that among the chiefly significant elements in the humanistic tradition are the invincibility of the inner world and the superiority of delightfulness over usefulness, or the immanence of contemplation over transitory action. Senor O'Gorman, the historian, came from the National University of Mexico to say that he understood pursuit of the humanities to entail a passionate interest in immersing oneself in the knowledge of man. With due respect for our intellectual and other accomplishments, Professor O'Gorman found little of this; in its stead he observed that "all the discussion sooner or later revealed an ultimate concern with problems of a practical nature."

His analysis of our best thought and scholarship merits reflection. He had hoped that scholars in the humanities would be willing to consider the debated question of the historicity of man but found them involved in "academic and methodological problems in the teaching of history, implicitly considered as a discipline in the formation of the civic spirit." He observed that our concern for man has to do with experimental psychology, but that we appear unaware "that such a knowledge is only a representation, a mere image of human existence, which instead of achieving a direct and original contact with that existence, simply offers a theoretical description."

Replies to his recently published letter in the *American Scholar* aver that O'Gorman is unfair in his report of the conference at Princeton, and this may be true. Whether or not he has been unfair to the conference, he has certainly been fair to much profession of the humanities in these days. I regret that he described our shortcomings as a lack of metaphysics and made the accusation in the name of Heidegger, since his criticism would with more point refer to the absence of profound critical thinking in the American pursuit of the humanities. This lack would, in the last analysis, fall under the heading of ethics. I believe Professor Jaeger was present at Princeton, and his work on *Paideia* well represents the critical ethical thinking for which, sad to say, the American study of the humanities is not famous.

A long essay or volume would be required to prove by critical examination of history, letters and ethics that the idea that the humanities are the culture of the past is wrong and the view implied by the two scholars quoted is correct. The contrast and its implications must be evident to all. Either inner action is more important than temporary outer action or it is not; if it is more important, it is clearly the concern of the humanities. Either the understanding of ourselves is a constant and lively and ever-renewed obligation of reasonable men or it is not. If it is our obligation, the humanist is something far different from a transmitter of the past, and the subject of his studies is something far subtler and more profound than societies; it is nothing less than a human being.

In a few words, what are the humanities? They are better represented by Leonardo sketching the faces of the condemned in the executioner's car than by Ficino editing Plato. They are the critical discovery of our own nature by use of the most reliable evidence and the most accurate ways available to treat it. The evidence is both direct, in a man's own life, and recorded, the record being important not at all because of its age (its age is incidental, and knowledge of its ages is of value only to illuminate its meaning) but because it is first class, that is, nearest to what we think is the truth, clearest, most accurate. All the best records are poetry. They may lack rhyme, meter, or external form; people are more comfortable when you call them literature; but in the broad sense of the thing *made* they are poetry. The raw experience of our lives related to them is best understood in the terms of poetry—that is, by superimposing upon experience an order and a form, not necessarily an old form, perhaps an altogether new one, but a form.

The primacy of this treatment of human experience was flatly stated by Aristotle. When one mentions Aristotle in these days, he is accused of being esoteric; but let us remember that the *Poetics* to which I here refer was an analysis of public opinion, of the reaction of common people in a crowd at the theatre, then and now the most

popular kind of thinking. Those who have read the essay with care are still inclined to deem it superior in precision to a Hooper rating. "Poetry," said Aristotle, "is something more scientific and serious than history." φιλοδοφώτερον — more scientific or more philosophical or, as sometimes translated, more nearly true. This sentence, illuminated by the Aristotelian idea of the universal and of fiction, gives the key to the nature of the humanities, not, obviously, because Aristotle delivered it, but because the predominating evidence over two millenia, in scores of nations, by millions of theatre-goers and hecatombs of critics and philosophers points to its viability. It implies that the subject of the humanities is man in action—inward as well as outward action—and it states that the peculiarly human way of representing, examining and reflecting upon this action is poetry, or what, using a more general term, we call literature.

These definitions bear upon the theory of general education which is now in process of revising the college course. They point to a misconception of poetry in the broad sense in which the term is here used and following that misconception, to a partial or one-sided account of the uses of the mind implicit in much current curricular revision.

First, the ignorance of what poetry is. This cannot be dispelled by describing poems. Poems should be spoken, written, and ruminated upon. To teach many people poetry would be to provide what Professor O'Gorman calls a direct, original and authentic knowledge of man instead of a representative, descriptive and imaginary one. To teach many people poetry, however, requires first of all schooling in imagination in order to improve the skill in sensing what is valid and tends toward truth and what is sentimental or fantastic. It requires also the highest type of accuracy, spiritual accuracy. It requires time and a special kind of learning, for what is being learnt is a way to think which is different from the way to think in other studies.

What really happens is that in poetry one refines and elaborates a natural and naïve way to think; in other sorts of learning this naturalness naïveté, for good reasons, are discredited. Gertrude Stein may have said some silly things, but now and then, a trenchant one, as when she remarked that in early childhood the image and the object are coincident, but imperceptibly as we grow older the object steals away from behind the image more and more, leaving us in an adult world composed almost entirely of images. Dialectic run riot creates a world of images divorced from their objects.

To train the imagination and learn by it to continue to see objects instead of images and to prize objects above images—that is the task of the teacher of the humanities. The higher learning by and large is the Lady of Shalott. Poetry alone makes it possible to look out the window as well as into the mirror. There is but one thing

more red-blooded than poetry and that is life itself. Cultural history is the reflection of poetry, little more than images. If experience is to be described by its circumstances, economic, political, historical, geographical, then experience itself will never be understood. Description of circumstances is the enemy of any truly humane understanding unless it is kept, as John Livingston Lowes said of the footnotes to *The Road to Xanadu*, "severely kennelled in the rear." Cultural history is stage directions and belongs behind the scenes. Even backstage it must be kept in its place. When John Barrymore, for example, undertook Hamlet, he eschewed all prefaces, critical commentary and footnotes, isolating himself in the woods for two years with nothing but the bare lines of the poem. He was determined that every inflection should be controlled by the meaning of the whole play, and the result was a production of Hamlet which by its penetration and new discovery of humor in the lines was the marvel even of the "authorities." To teach poetry with honor, the intellectual process must be held in honor, side by side with the historical and dialectical processes, which, when they become overweening, dishonor poetry and discredit it.

A good practical way to train the imagination to see objects instead of images is to translate some prose or verse out of Greek or Latin into English, or the reverse, for to make a fair representation of the ideas in another language requires both imagination, and in the process, a disciplining, for the imagination is applied, if the foreign literature is a good one, to the subtlest and most elusive and most important ideas of mankind. To write a sonnet in English; to write a story and make it a story and make it come off; to produce a play or act a complex part: these are exercises both in the development of imagination and the discipline of it. Most of all to read poetry and understand it—perhaps to prove your understanding by the perfect and only inflection in reading the lines aloud; that is an accomplishment.

How does this training begin? It starts small and remains at its highest reaches dependent upon understanding the elements: metaphor, over-tone, innuendo, lyric, and story. These are not mere techniques of analysis. When I say understanding metaphor I do not mean the tagging of tropes, learning the difference between the definitions of metaphor and simile, and the Virgilian simile. I mean the way the poet thinks and the way, if he is to be understood, the reader must think. That is, to *think* with metaphor, lyric, and story.

Metaphor is as essential to the understanding of poetry as interpolation to trigonometry. Without a lively and active knowledge of metaphor in use, you could no more read *The Eve of St. Agnes* or *Antigone and the Tyrant* than you could expect, without algebra, to deal with the quantum theory. Let us name over, textbook fashion, some of the departments of using metaphor: it carries you toward precision

in both the visible and invisible world; each metaphor has its own limitations; if carried one step beyond its own proper use a metaphor turns away from accuracy and quickly offends you by its untruth (consider the dead idea of "perspective" in the committee opinion about culture); to use Robert Frost's phrase, there is "metaphor of the whole" and "metaphor of the part." While dying Thomas Hardy had read to him Walter de la Mare's poem, *The Listeners*, which contains the lines

Tell them I came and no one answered
That I kept my word, he said.

Undoubtedly the reason Hardy asked for the poem is its metaphor of the whole.

Metaphor of the part without metaphor of the whole produces bright sayings, epigrams and witty conversation. Metaphor of the whole without metaphor of the part produces dead raw argument, the mere prose thinking of logical metaphysicians. Metaphor of the part when reiterated becomes fixed in symbols (cherubim and the dove); some of it has further hardened into language (*spiritus*, spirit). In a poem metaphor of the part must be wild, free and surprising, and to order the amazing revelations into a poem all metaphor of the part must serve the metaphor of the whole. Some consider metaphors mere "beauties," the cloves to the ham. They are, of course, the substance of poetry, as of thought.

Metaphor may be physical on both sides, as when you say the cook's face was as red as the lid of the stove. Or it may go from material to immaterial, as when you say, "He wounds with his shield." The unmentioned sword is there, the sword with which most men deliver wounds. But to speak of this is to become, as Mr. Frost says, "too thorough." Those five words of the metaphor itself contain a full novel. Walter Pater made a metaphor so elaborate that one would think it could not stay in our consciousness to assist thought—"to burn always with that hard gem-like flame," but in spite of its complexity this idea remains among the working tools of our minds.

Lyric also is a way of thinking—for the poet and for the reader. It is one large manifestation of celebration, the mode of any art. Most things seen or thought about have a very slight third dimension if any depth at all. In the arts the third dimension is so real that the object stands surrounded by air and light, separated from the world behind and beneath, all by itself and undeniably a thing. It is placed in the world, but for the moment isolated and vivid to the eye, as vivid as the figure in a Renaissance portrait, bright, dark, warm and present, cutting with its contour the pale blue shapes of the landscape background. It has light and weight and depth, like a loaf by Vermeer. We say it sings. This is its celebration; something

glorifies it. If it is a snake, it is more snake—"tumbling in twenty coils"; if a drunkard, more surely drunk—"This is my right hand, and this is my left"; a rascal, Iago; the lovesick, "If music be the food of love, play on"; a lover.

She bids you on the wanton rushes lay you down
And she will sing the song that pleases you.

Eric Bentley recently remarked that a potato by Cezanne would be superior to a crucifixion by Holman Hunt. The reason is that Cezanne was the better celebrant. By glorifying the object in light he made it more truly itself. The counterpart of this quality in poetry is lyric. Why, for example, is the ugly story of Medea a poem when Euripides tells it and little more than a shrill scream when Robinson Jeffers tries his hand? Not because Euripides prettifies it, oh no. But because in the Euripides play there is lyric and in the Jeffers, none. Chaucer has a reputation for telling stories; half of it rests on the fact that he is a lyricist.

To celebrate an idea is not to gild it; on the contrary, it is to see it as in itself it really is. Well celebrated, the cock stands up in the barnyard, surrounded by the sun, and when he crows

In all the land of crowyng nas his peer:
His voys was murier than the murie orgon.

In short, he is more truly cock. Shakespeare, a master of the metaphor of the part as well as of metaphor of the whole, makes unendurable pain more bearable by lyric—

We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage.

By becoming endurable, the tragedy deepens; the pain has not blacked you out in a faint; you are still conscious, and there before you is the terrible destruction of the unfilial and unimaginative mind. The awful fact is the longer and more accurately regarded.

Celebration is a method of holding under the eye for a span something eminently worth notice. As it proceeds, for example, in the songs of Ophelia, not only the eye but our whole inward apprehension observes, and what we see is many times greater than what can be conveyed by prose. In artificial light a painting of Renoir has a few strong colors and that is all; by daylight, a hundred unsuspected ones. It is so when by means of celebration we see a thing or a person or an idea.

Like familiarity with lyric, familiarity with story is acquired by use, not by precept. These lessons take long to learn. History proves that all kinds of people learn them: fishermen, bank presidents, the C man, the disciplinary case, the Phi Beta Kappa. To know a story and why it is a story and why it cannot remain the same and be trans-

lated into exposition and that the rarest and mightiest possessions of the human spirit can be discovered only by means of story and by no other process of thinking; to know all this and to have it yours is to have much. The beginnings of this knowledge are available, like general education, to every man, and to each according to his capacity to take and use.

For most American youth Greek and Latin are gone and have been lamented. In the search for something to take their place, we should remember the real usefulness of those honorable studies. They trained the imagination. This was possible even in the old harsh grammatical and translating disciplines for four reasons: because the literature to be read was peculiarly refined and strong, because the languages were two of the best, because the pause necessary to deal with phrases in a strange tongue gave time for the meaning of the phrases to work upon the student, and because the difficult task of conveying as nearly as possible in our own language the subtle intent of the ancient sentences required extensive trial of little-used resources of our own tongue. If and when something is found effectively to take the place of the old schoolboy Greek and Latin, it will be something which also requires long meditation upon words and their elaborate meanings and upon the affairs of the human heart which produce wars, marriages and harvest festivals. No thoughtful boy is the same after beginning to master in the few years of the end of adolescence the meaning of *hybris*, *nemesis* and *areté*. It may be that by reading and writing poetry and dwelling upon the voluminous significance of the words with which we carry on privately the soul's own conversation with herself, that is, American English words, young people will come equally far by beginning to master the meaning of such loaded words as *lust-in-action*, *charity*, *felicity*.

These matters may sound small, not to say trivial, in the presence of discussion by the President's Commission of The Bomb and the United Nations and their opinion that the guiding principle of general education for all youth should be the discovery and dissemination of new social techniques. They are small but not trivial. For example, a boy back from the Burma Road tussled and struggled with the ballads, finding no connection between those old wars and war as he had seen it. The class read *The Ode to Melancholy*, and on this he spent fearful travail. Asked what the poem said, he replied after literally hours of thought: "Don't be downhearted!" Sent back to try again, he reported that the poem means, "Always be downhearted!" So he labored for a fruitless year and a half. One day he came to say he had heard on the radio "The Twelve Days of Christmas." "What a poem! That was wonderful! I had no idea there was anything like that!" And so he is started in a new mode of apprehension. This is small, but I know that when he falls in love his image of the girl he loves will not be determined altogether by the golden

and empty-faced beauties of Hollywood, but what he and his girl possess together will be elaborated by at least this old and delicate poem—at least by this, for when one begins to hear poetry the first poem is but a beginning. These are only two people in a populous nation, but multiply their story and see the effect on the quality of American life. Men and women who understand poetry should be concerned with its long exacting mastery by the young. That in the first place.

With a firmer grasp of what poetry in its broad sense is and how to think with it, the nature of the education necessary for all men becomes clarified. The chief problem posed by the new humanities courses, which are cultural history and mostly in translation—English, is whether or not they can exert a wholesome influence toward unifying undergraduate studies without violating the fundamental variety of the ways in which the mind copes with the essential fields of experience. Mathematics and dialectic are two closely allied habits of the mind, and they are adequate for the study of physical nature and for the analysis of fact and opinion about men in groups called social science. They are not the best ways to think about man. The mode of humanistic study is distinct from them. Rhetoric does not describe it, since that ancient word is tainted by its origin in the arts of persuasion. Grammar and logic are involved, and something very much more: in clumsy fashion the mode may be described by the phrase poetic thinking. To say that cultural history is the core of general education is to ignore this fundamental truth. Literature as literature is vital to the intellectual life of even the least intellectual.

The beginner in the short-story course puts into the mouth of his hero coming out of a swoon the words, "Where am I?" But the instructor red-pencils this. Almost anything else is allowed: "Who hit me?" or "Edythe!" or "Water!" Modern man is said to have been clopped on the head, and the authors of the dialogue seek words to put into his mouth as he comes back to daylight. For all our cleverness, we who represent the higher learning have managed to think up nothing more original for his next speech than "Where am I?"

I refer to the new general education courses and their lust for location. They assume that what men need most is to learn where they are, and they try to give bearings on the past. As one reads more closely the reports of committees and prefaces to new courses one learns that the real subject of study is not man but societies—how this society emerged from some other and how it compares with a third. I have quoted some of the ablest university leaders to this effect. The report of the President's Commission on Higher Education released last December says the same thing.

I am willing to grant that it is usually a good thing to know your way about, but let us not forget the many brilliant and able minds of our acquaintance who get lost in the streets, and for whom

ignorance of the compass is nothing worse than an amusing joke. Let us remember also how downright destructive map-mindedness can be. I once watched a group of tourists "do" the Louvre, camera on chest, guide-book open in hand. They trooped into a room containing a famous small head by Lotto, finding their way by their feet as they read the compass card in Baedeker. By some miraculous museum habit their feet stopped before the picture; they finished reading, looked up, and exclaimed, almost in unison, "Lotto!" and left the room.

Location courses are designed to meet the objection that the university has become a multiversity and to give not only unity but integration (medicinal word). The argument runs that while a century and a half ago theology, often dispensed in lectures by the president of the college, gave centrality to studies, such supernatural assistance is no longer available (perhaps because the presidents are no longer supermen) and history, including the history of ideas, must make whatever sense can be made of the fascinating welter of modern knowledge.

Western Civilization; the Humanities: as one reads the description of these courses he observes a kind of *mappa mundi*, and it is by no accident that in this *nouvel moyen age* we have turned to making maps. In austere rationalism, barely warmed by imagination, and lacking the courage and abandon which goes with humor, we have earnestly studied, as did our cousins, the scholastic thinkers, the connectives of knowledge. Academic people like to regard the proposals of St. John's College and the University of Chicago as mediaeval oddities in the twentieth century. Some of the efforts to implement the proposals are certainly unusual, but the intellectual reaction which they represent is fairly general in our lifetime. It is a force in most committee thinking about the higher learning, the reaction from disorder to system.

The fact that "Where am I?" is trite means that really we think something like it, though rarely in those stage-worn words. One of our concerns is, in truth, location, and the trouble with locating ourselves by means of *mappa mundi* or chronology or philosophical system is that no one of these compass cards nor all taken together have the important dimensions. And by studying hard the facts of history or the movements of society or the systems of philosophy, we may in effect abuse our sense of where we are within ourselves and in relation to what in truth confronts us. All that explicit location of these various studies—history, philosophy, politics—is surely useful. But it becomes significant to the individual only if simultaneously he has mastered other ways to think.

Know thyself. The ancient phrase has probably been made to mean literally everything which anybody ever thought important. Someone in a famous university once publicly said he thought it

meant: Know your cells and organs; for he emblazoned the slogan at the Chicago Century of Progress Exposition over formaldehyde exhibits of the human embryo and foetus in successive stages. For the ancients, *γνώθι σεαυτόν* referred, among other things, to location. *Know Thyself* meant "Know where you stand." So Critias in the *Charmides*, speaking of the inscription at the temple of Delphi, said, "That word, if I am not mistaken, is put there as a word of salutation which the god addresses to those who enter the temple; as much as to say that the ordinary salutation of 'Hail!' is not right, and that the exhortation 'Be Temperate!' would be a far better way of saluting one another. The notion of him who dedicated the inscription was, as I believe, that the god speaks to those who enter his temple, not as men speak; but when a worshipper enters, the first word which he hears is 'Be temperate!' This, however, like a prophet he expresses in a sort of riddle, for 'Know Thyself!' and 'Be Temperate!' are the same . . ."

Mayor Harrison of Chicago said during the 1893 World's Fair: Chicago can achieve whatever it purposes, and it has fixed its purpose upon a star. Let us imagine, in the absence of proof, that this mayor took himself seriously. Then location would have been important for him; he might have avoided talking like a fool by knowing where as men we all stand. Location in these terms involves dimensions difficult to grasp, the important dimensions dealt with by poetry. It is the knowledge acquired at fearful cost by the protagonists in tragedy. "This knowledge," says Professor Bowra in speaking of Sophoclean tragedy, "is about themselves, but primarily about themselves in relation to the gods." "For Sophocles," he goes on, "this is the essential and fundamental knowledge. A man does not know himself or his place until he knows how he stands with the gods."

All this sounds biggity, not to say ultimate. I introduce it because the exponents of general education quite properly talk of ultimates, proposing that the education to be made available to every man and to each according to his capacity should be determined by the ultimate idea of what learning is. This should be the effort to understand man by thinking in the peculiarly human way, that is, in poetry. Thinking thus, one usually is occupied with less than the final high seriousness of the mighty ideas of tragedy. Comedy also, and ballads and stories and lyrics place you. They place you in the frieze, the peopled frieze that goes around the Parthenon and the procession which goes around the strange mysterious earth. Many an American lacks just this sense of location, and among them, many, who like Richard Cory, are regarded as successful. Why is it that to many of them, as to him, the active and acquisitive life for which we are famous is ashes in the mouth? It proves an illusion, a mere image. Why, as a people, do we lack the disciplined imagination necessary to recognize it for what it is, an image divorced from its object? Such

considerations as these should be introduced into the debates about the purpose of general education.

In sum, the current notions of the nature of the humanities and of the nature of general education could be clarified by a first-hand sense of what poetry is and this in turn would lead to redressing the imbalance in the curricular discussions.

Clearly, what I speak of is of vast importance to the world. This, rather than the mere improvement of social science and technology, should concern the American supporters of UNESCO. Why should it be that our rich and powerful and generous nation, so ambitious in the spirit of toleration and earnestly concerned to safeguard tolerance in social and political matters, should be regarded by many of the finest minds abroad as fundamentally intolerant of any but the active and successful and humanitarian American way of life? Why, but because our splendid imagination, which is the marvel of the century in industry and war, is confined largely to mechanical things and because as an intellectual force in the world we lack precisely what a rich and intimate use of poetry requires: that is, direct perception both of the realities of existence and of the numerous conjectures worthy the allegiance of a brave man concerning its ends.

Gordon Keith Chalmers





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